A VIEW OF THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION OF BIHAR UNDER FARRUKHSIYAR, 1712-19.

By

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The decade following the death of Aurangzeb (March, 1707) was a very eventful and important one, particularly from the point of view of the provincial history of Bihar. It was a period during which Bihar came in the foreground of the general political history of the country. The recall of Prince Azimusshan, Governor of Bihar and Bengal, by Aurangzeb on the eve of his death; Azimusshan's leaving his two sons, Karim and Farrukhsiyar, in charge of Bengal and Bihar respectively; his subsequent call to Farrukhsiyar to return to the Court; Farrukhsiyar's journey from Rajmahal, his arrival at Patna and, on hearing of Bahadur Shah's death (Feb. 1712), his proclamation of his father's accession; Azimusshan's death and Farukhsiyar's enthronement in the garden of Afzal Khan in Patna, while he was without any financial resources and substantial support; the dramatic episode of the espousal of his apparently forlorn cause by Syed Husain Ali Khan and the final triumphal entry into Delhi (Feb. 1713) are all well-known matters of general history.[1] But while the broad outline of the history of the period is well established there is considerable lack of information regarding the provincial history of Bihar during the first quarter of the 18th century.

In the present article some details of the provincial history and administration of Bihar under the reign of Farrukhsiyar are being presented on the basis of the *Akhbarat-i-Darba -i-Mualla.* The value of the *Akhbarats* as one of the most dependable primary source for the history of the later Mughal period does not need much emphasis.

For the present article I have used the copy of a transcript of *Akhbarats* which the late J. N. Sarkar got prepared for himself in 1955, and which is now preserved among his valuable Collection donated to the National Library.

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1. Irvine, W., *Later Mughals*, Edited and continued by J. N. Sarkar, Vol. I.

In keeping with the basic nature of the *Akhbarats* these entries are of a diverse nature and do not follow any particular pattern of arrangement, except a general chronological one. But for the sake of convenience I have arranged them under the headings of (i) Political, (ii) Administrative, (iii) Revenue and (iv) Miscellaneous.

The entries under (i) relate to the rebellion and depradations of the Ujjainiya chieftain, Sudhist Narain, son of Kunwar Dhir, who also figures prominently in the *Akhbarats* of Aurangzeb's reign, and those of the *Zamindars* of Morang and Dharampur.

Sudhist Narain was, in the beginning, disaffected towards Husain Ali Khan but had been won over by the mediation of Ahmad Beg and brought with him a large force. Later, as evidenced by the *Akhbarats*, he broke out with Farrukhsiyar and became rebellious.[2]

The entries relating to administrative matters are even more interesting. They throw light on the various forms of corruption prevailing at the different levels of administration and affecting some of the high-ranking and responsible officers.

They also reveal—and this point is more important because it is often overlooked—that even during this period of decline in the standard of administration these lapses did not go unnoticed and unremedied. The ubiquitous Waqai Navis and the Sawanih Nigar, 'the eyes and the ears of the government' were working efficiently and fearlessly. They kept contact with the ordinary people and transmitted their complaints and grievances to the Emperor and, invariably, some action was taken upon them. Incidentally, these entries also give us an idea about the procedures through which the different grade of the news-writers worked, a point on which some confusion still exists.

Taken together, these specific cases help us see the actual working of the provincial administration in a new and enlightening manner. The study of Manuals of Administration, undoubtedly necessary by itself, cannot be a substitute for a study based on actual case-records. The latter give us a 'touch' of the day to day working of the administrative machinery in a particular region.

Another information afforded to us is in regard to the appointments, postings, promotions and transfers of the provincial officers. Our present knowledge of this topic, not only about Bihar but about most other provinces is very sketchy and incomplete.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 210-11.

About Bihar particularly, a list of provincial governors (and that too not without gaps) and a general account of some of the important events, which either had their origin or led to important repercussions in Bihar, is about all that we have. Even the provincial governors appear as shadowy figures. Further studies, based on *Akhbarats* and such other sources, will add a little more substance to these shadowy figures and provide a little more depth to the present sketchy outlines.

A word about the transcript and the English translation of its relevant portions may be added. The transcript, while generally faultless, is not quite legible at one or two places and has also a few gaps. These have been indicated in the text but they do not affect the general sense. There are also a couple of mistakes about the correct regnal years (all entries are dated according to *Julus*). These were corrected by J. N. Sarkar himself.

In regard to the persons and places mentioned I considered it superfluous to add footnotes about well-known personages such as Qutbul Mulk, Mir Jumla, Jafar Khan and Mutamidul-mulk, etc. About others references have been given where available, but a few individual names as well as place names could not be identified. In a few cases information already availabe in printed works has also been indicated.

Most of the sub-headings at the top of the different entries were given by Dr. Sarkar and I have retained them.

(i) Political :—

DEPRADATIONS OF SUDHIST NARAIN, THE UJJAINIYA CHIEF

"It was reported by the Waqai Nigar of Bihar that Sudhist Narain (sic), son of the accursed Dhir, was, encamped in the *qasba* of Bhojpur with a force of 16000 *sawars* and was looting on the highway. He intended to kill the Amil of Sasaram and to set up his own *thanas*.

Ordered that it should be referred to the Bakhshiul mamalik (Syed Hussian Ali Khan) 28 Shawwal, 3 R. Y. = 16 Oct. 1715."

Another *Akhbar* of the same year also refers to the sense of insecurity and panic prevailing in Patna on account of depradations of Sudhist Narain and other *Zamindars*. It reads as follows :

PANIC IN PATNA

"Baburao the royal Harkara reported thru' Hafiz Ghulam Muhammad, the Darogha of Harkaras, and on the basis of the report of

(his) Naib in Bihar, that Mutamidul mulk Mir Jumla, after reaching Patna had appointed Sidi Qaim as the Kotwal of the town for the prevention of oppressions and for the removal of panic on account of the depradations of Sudhist Narain and other local *Zamindars* as well as the stopping of the nuisance caused by thieves and vagabonds. He proclaimed that there should be no (further) thefts and gambling in the town. Khaja Kabir and Khaja Firdaus were imprisoned so that no one should collect a *dam* more than the royal dues and the *Zamindars* should protect their cultivation and if there be any theft in anyone's house[3] .. : 27 Jamadi, II, 4 R.Y.=[4] May, 1715."

Mir Jumla's governorship of Bihar has been characterised as incompetent and oppresive by some of the contemporary writers. Without denying this charge the present news-item may be quoted to show that he did take certain steps to maintain law and order in the city.

There is one more entry about the rebellious activities of Sudhist Narain. It relates to his siege of Arrah fort in 1717 and his defeat by Sarbuland Khan.

Attack on Arrah Fort

"Baburao the Royal Harkara reported thru' Imtiaz Khan, the Darogha of Harkaras, and on the basis of the report of his naib (in) Subah Bihar, that Sarbuland Khan, the Nazim of the Subah on hearing the news of Alam Khan, the fort-keeper of Arrah fort, having been besieged by Sudhist Narain, son of Dhir, consigned to hell, deputed (to Arrah) his niab, Muhammad Qaim Bakhshi, Muhammad Naim, the Darogha of Artillery, and others with a well-equipped army. Accordingly, the above-mentioned persons, after a lot of fighting, inflicted injuries and consigned to hell the shameless contingent (of the enemies) and annexed the fortress under the control of the ill-fated ones and established *thanas*. The victory of the nobles of the powerful kingdom took place.

On hearing this news the Nazim of the Subah awarded to the above-mentioned persons 3 *thans* (20 yards=1 than of cloth) each, and

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3. The transcript is incomplete.

4. In the transcript the regnal year is given as 3 but Dr. Sarkar corrected it to 4 which fits in with the period of Mir Jumla's governorship of Bihar as we know it from other contemporary works.

also some promotions. Other persons who had rendered services (in this connection) were also included in the promotions.

Ordered that Samsamud-daula[5] should write to Sarbuland Khan that his dutiful efforts were appreciated ; (and he was granted audience) 19 Ziqad, 5 R. Y. = 14 Oct. 1717."

DEPRADATIONS OF HARI SINGH, ZAMINDAR OF DHARAMPUR

"Extract (of newsreport) received from Subah Bihar (to the effect) that Jafar Khan (Murshid Quli Khan) the naib Nazim of Bengal says that Hari Singh the disaffected *Zamindar* of Dharampur [6] had encroached upon the *taluqas* of the *subahdari* : althu' I am capable of chastising him I am awaiting the arrival of Mir Jumla to see as to what he does (about it).

It has (since) transpired that the said *Zamindar* is himself ready for fighting and wants to send his men to Morang,[7] but for the encouragement of the local ryots and in order to win over their support he had circulated the rumour that he had sent his *vakil* to Mir Jumla's army. Rs. 50,000... Shukrullah Khan[8]... with the help of these he is keeping the soldiery and the ryots attached to himself; and with complete contentment and at his leisure he is displacing the *amlahs* of the *parganas* of the *Khalsa* lands of the *Jagirdars* and collecting the revenues. He has constructed a fort close to the *pargana* of Sajapur, Sarkar Purnea, and collects *Rahdari* tax. He is bringing under his control one *pargana* every day and if negligence in shown in his chastisement God knows to what extent his deprations would continue ? Order may be issued to the *Zamindar* of Morang that he should not give him (Hari Singh) any shelter, (but) on the contrary he should arrest him and send him over so that his route (of escape) may be cut off.

5. For an account of his life see Irvine, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-66. His full title was Samsamud daulah Khan i Dauran Bahadur Mansur Jung.

6. There is a Dharampur estate in the Kishangunj subdivision of Purnea district. According to the Purnea Gazetteer it had an income of Rs. 4 lakhs. It has to distinguish from Pargana Dharampur in the western portion of the district. The reference to Morang which is nearer to Kishanganj suggests that the place mentioned here was in Kishanganj.

7. The sub-Himalayan jungle tract, including parts of the Nepal tarai area, on the north-eatern border of Bihar. It was a turbulent area and caused much trouble to the Mughal *faujdars* of Purnea. It was conquered in the time of Aurangzeb.

8. A few words here are not quite clear.

Ordered that Samsamud daula be directed to write urgently to the *Zamindar* of Morang that he should not give shelter to him, rather he should send him under arrest. He would receive an audience for this : 7 Ramzan, 4 R. Y. =26 August, 1715."

It appears from a subsequent news-letter that a few months after this incident the *zamindar* of Morang also turned rebellious. It reads as follows :

"(It was) reported that Mir Jumla, Nazim of Bengal, having left Akbarabad, had crossed the Jumna.

It was learnt from the news-letter of Bengal (sent) thru', Mirza Ghulam Muhammad, Darogha of Sawanih, that Habibullah had reported that the *zamindar* of Morang having collected an army was creating disturbances in *Sarkar* Baquipur Purnea ; he had captured some men and lifted some cattle from four or five villages near the *thana* of *pargana* Sultanpur and had established himself inside the royal boundaries. The people of that area were running away from his terror and coming into the town of Purnea.

Dalilullah Khan, the *faujdar* (of Purnea) was appointing[9] troops for the chastisement of the above-mentioned *zamindars*. Jafar Khan said that how it was that the said Khan was provoking hostilities with a border *zamindar* without orders from above ; he should be pulled up.

Ordered that Taqarrub Yar[10] Khan should report (on this matter) : 25 Safar, 4 R. Y. = Feb. 1716."

(ii) Administrative :—

HOARDING AND PROFITEERING BY LOCAL OFFICIALS OF PURNEA]

"It was reported in an extract from the Waqai of Subah Bihar sent by Nahif (?) Khan that the ryots and small traders of Purnea had submitted (complained) that 6000 maunds of paddy and rice, 100 maunds of thread [11] (Jute ?) and 104 maunds of cotton[12] had been stored by the Qazi and the Mufti. Because of these purchases by the Qazi and the Mufti not a grain of cereal was available to anyone else. As these officers

9. As above.

10. He was the Lord High Steward, see Irvine, *op. cit.*, p. 259

11 The actual word in the transcript is not quite clear but it looks like (*sut*).

12 As above, the word looks like (*pumba*).

are in charge of checking (itself) they sell these things at their own prices and therefore scarcity of grains has arisen ; entered in the Waqai.

Ordered that the Sadr us Sadur should reprimand the Qazi and the Mufti : 4 Ramzan, R.Y. = II August, 1716."

CORRUPTION AMONG PUBLIC SERVANTS.

"Baburao, the royal Harkara, reported that Bhairomal, the *peshkar* of the provincial Diwan, was (illegally) giving *sandas* of *jagirs* to the *jagirdars* after charging (illegal gratification) 30 rupees per lakh (of the value of jagir). By his odious nature he was (thus) rendering null and void the exalted orders (received) in regard to the various cases and therefore the affiars of the *Khalsa* lands were deteriorating.

Ordered that Qutubul mulk (Abdullah Khan) should appoint some one else in his place : 22 Rajab, 4. R. Y. = I July, 1716."

OPPRESSION BY A SHIQDAR OF SARKAR PURNEA AND HIS REMOVAL

"It was reported in the *Waqai* of Subah Bengal sent by Nahif (?) Khan that the ryots of Sarkar[13]. ...Purnea had complained that Durg mal the Shiqdar of Achhri ? appointed by Dalilullah Khan was collecting more than the due revenues and the ryots were fleeing away as a result.

Ordered that Khan-i-Dauran should write to Zafar Khan to transfar Dalilullah Khan, the *Faujdar* of that place, and appoint in his place, Saifullah Khan, son of Amir Khan (deceased). 12 Zilhij, 4 R. Y. = 17 October, 1716."

(iii) Revenue :—

ABOLITION OF RAHDARI TAX IN BIHAR AND ITS VIOLATION BY A ZAMINDAR

It was reported, yesterday, in the report of the Harkara of Bengal, (Bihar ?) subordinate to Anand Rao, that Jafar Khan Nazim of Subahdari Kutcheri said that the amount of Rupees fifteen lakhs which appertained to the *Rahdari*[14] etc., of the Province had been abolished in accordance with royal order. In the other provinces *Rahdari* was levied.

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13. One word, probably, the name of the Sarkar is not clear.
14. A transit duty levied on grain and other merchandise passing thru' internal trade routes,

(Althu') Hari Singh zamindar of Gondwara[15] and Kalwara[16] attached to Subah Bihar, had abolished *Rahdari* in that Subah (but) had added the amount of that (*Rahdari*) upon his own Demand (and thus) the abolition was not being enforced in the Subah of Azimabad alias Patna (sic).

Ordered that Mutamidul mulk should report (on this), 12 Ziqad 3 R. Y. = 29 October, 1715."

TRANSMISSION OF BENGAL REVENUES TO DELHI BY BOAT

"From the news-letter of Akbarnagar, Subah Bengal, transmitted by Muhammad Waali thru' Hadi Khan (Wataya Khan) it transpired that (previously) the officers of *chakla* Akbarnagar used to deposit the amounts of the collections of *Mal* (Revenue Demand) and *Sayer* (Cesses) in the royal *kothis* (and) when the treasure-boats from Bengal on their way to Highness, (towards Delhi) reached Akbarnagar those amounts were handed over to the Daroga ; (thus) there used to be no delay in their transmission to Highness. Nowadays, the Amin does not deposit the amount of collection, under his seal, in the royal *kothis* rather he keeps it in his own house. This causes delay in the transmission of the Treasure to Highness.

Ordered that Taqarrub Khan should write to Jafar Khan and ask him to order the local Amin to act in accordance with regulations, 17 Jamadi II, 4. R.Y. = 28 May, 1716."

It is interesting to note that there are some other references, too, to the holding up of the Bengal treasure, on its way to Delhi, at Patna. Wilson refers[17] to a dispute, during the governorship of Ghairat Khan

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15. It comprises the eastern part of the pargana of Dharampur, vide above. It is mentioned as one of the constituent parts of Purnea by Buchanan (Purnea Report, pp. 64-66). It is important to note that it was attached to Bihar. This shows that some portion of western Purnea was included in Bihar as early as the first quarter of the 18th century. Pargana Dharampur itself is mentioned as belonging to Sarkar Monghyr (Farrukhabad) in a *Firman* of Aurangzeb, dated 1665 ; see my article in IHRC. Progs., Vol. XXXVI, pp. 89-98.

16. It could not be located but was, perhaps, situated near about the other area alongside.

17. Wilson, C. R., *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II. pp. 24-26.

that occured between the Nawab and his Diwan and Bakshi about the transmission of the Bengal treasure. The Bakshi advised against its being sent beyond Patna for fear of its being looted by Sudhist Narain's men and recommended that it should be held in Patna fort. The Nawab, however, disagreed and having arranged a powerful escort sent it on. Sudhist was overawed and executed an agreement assuring its safe passage thru' his area.

(iv) Miscellaneous :—

APPOINTMENT OF FAUJDAR OF MONGHYR

"Syed Ali Khan son of Amir Khan (deceased) was appointed *Faujdar* of Monghyr and was awarded *Khilat* and *Inaam*, 19 Rajab, 4 R.Y. = 28 June, 1716."

APPOINTMENT OF FAUJDAR OF NURHAT ?

"Akbar Ali brother of the Muzaffar Ali Khan *Walashahi*[18] was appointed *Faujdar* of Nurhat ? in place of Ahmad Quli Khan son of Sarbuland Khan. (He) had a *mansab* of 25000 zat and 2000 *sawar*; now an increase of 500 *sawars*, conditional, was ordered and, after conferring a special *Khilat* he was granted permission to leave, 1 Rajab 7 R.Y. = 9 May, 1719."

KHILAT TO RAJA TAHAWWUR SINGH OF KHARAGPUR

"A *Khilat* was granted to Raja Tahawwur[19] Singh of Kharagpur for services, 5 Shaban 4 R.Y. = 5 August, 1714."

AWARD OF MANSAB TO MUHAMMAD TAHIR

"Yesterday, Muhammed Tahir[20], posted in Subah Bihar was honoured with (a mansab of) 700 *zat* and 100 *Sawars* ; he was also given the title of Khan, 24 Ziqad 3 R.Y. = 10 Nov."

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18. Belonging to the Personal Troops, vide, Irvine, *op. cit.*, p. 260.
19. Raja Tahawwur Asad (not Singh), son of Raja Bahroze, was the third raja of Kharagpur (Dist. Monghyr) He and his father rendered meritorious services in the conquest of Palamau by Daud Khan, vide *Alamgirnama*. His name occurs in the *Akhbars* of Aurangzeb's reign in connection with the suppression of Gangaram's rebellion in Bihar and that of the Jaintiya raja who had sacked Sylhet in 1682. A mosque built by him in Kharagpur bears the date 30 R. Y. of Aurangzeb.
20. No reference about him is available

ROHTAS FORT RENAMED AS FARRUK NAGAR

"It was ordered that the fort of Rohtasgarh shall be renamed as Farrukhnagar.

An earlier *Akhbar*, of the last month of Bahadur Shah's reign, dated 21st January, 1712, gives the following account of the capture of Rohtas fort by Farrukhsiyar's men :

"It was reported that Abdullah Khan Bahadur, Naib of Allahabad sent a *khil ιt* and *Nishan*, on behalf of (prince) Farrukhsiyar to Reyayat (Rayat) Khan alias Muhammad Razi who was in possession of Rohtasgarh, situated in Bengal. The presents were sent thru' four Syeds and when the recipient came out to receive them the above mentioned Syeds attacked him with daggers and killed him and brought the fort under the control of His Highness[21]..."

Irvine refers to the occupation of Rohtas fort by Reyat Khan. He writes that when Farrukhsiyar first arrived at Patna Syed Husain Ali Khan was 'away on an expedition, apparently, the re-capture of Rohtas fort which about this time had been seized by one Muhammad Raza Rayat Khan[22].'

MINTING OF COINS IN AKBARNAGAR MINT

"Balkishun the *vakil* of Jafar Khan, Nazim of Bengal presented 5 Muhars and 40 rupees, dated 7th regnal year, of the Jahangir nagar (Dacca) Akbar nagar (Rajmahal) and Orissa mints (for approval) ?

Two hemstiches composed by him (Jafar Khan) and given below were also submitted :

O' thou, whose throne is equal in rank to Solomon's Crown.
O' thou, whose rank is a support to Timur's throne,
Your *Khutba* and coin is current in the seven climes,
God gave (it) to you, may it prove auspicous :
enjoy and bestow fevours."
27 Shaban, 7 R. Y. = 4 July, 1719.

ARRIVAL OF MIR JUMLA IN PATNA

"Baburao the *Walashahi*,[23] Harkara reported thru' Hafiz Ghulam Muhammad, Darogha of Harkaras, and on the basis of the report

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21. There are a couple of sentences, after this, relating to the news of the birth of a son to Farrukhsiyar.
22. Irvine, *op. cit.*, p. 205.
23. See foot-note No. 18.

of the Naib in Subah Bihar, that Mir Jumla Bahadur having encamped near the city (Patna) entered into it along with his followers on the 1st Jamadi II. 4. R. Y. (24 May, 1715) ; he distributed Rs. 1000 among the people of the city and, on entering the fort, paid due respects. On the 2nd, after passing 1 *pahar* and 2 *gharis* and,[24] after saluting the throne he sat for 5 *gharis* in the Diwan-i-Aam and Khas along with the dignitaries of the *Shara* and all the officers and held court and looked into complaints. At the time of dispersing he performed obeisance to the throne which is effulgent with the light of Your Majesty's good fortune, 27 Jamadi II, 3. R. Y. = 18 June, 1715."[25]

Wilson gives the date of Mir Jumla's arrival in Patna as sometime after April, 1715 when he was at Sasaram. This *Akhbar* gives the exact date.

The repeated reference to paying of respects to a throne is interesting. Farrukhsiyar was enthroned at Patna and his reign was officially calculated to have begun from that date (ignoring the intervening reign of Jahandar Shah). Does this throne refer to the one actually used for Farrukhsiyar which was regarded as an auspicious one and to which Mir Jumla, his close associate, paid homage in a rather ostentatious manner ?

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24. Units of measurement of time ; 1 pahar = 3 hours, 1 ghari = 24 mts.
25. As in foot-note no. 4 ; Dr. Sarkar further noted (from Wilson) that 'Mir Jumla left Delhi, on being appointed Governor of Bihar, in Dec. 1714, spent 1715 in Patna and crept back in Delhi on 16 January 1716.'